DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 355 406 CE 063 263

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TITLE Bringing Multiculturalism to Vocational Education. Monograph. Volume 8, Number 1.
INSTITUTION Ohio State Univ., Columbus. Center for Sex Equity.
SPONS AGENCY Ohio State Dept. of Education, Columbus. Div. of Vocational and Career Education.
PUB DATE 93
NOTE 7p.
PUB TYPE Information Analyses (070)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Cultural Pluralism; Culture Fair Tests; *Educational Attitudes; Educational Needs; Educational Practices; *Education Work Relationship; Ethnic Groups; Heterogeneous Grouping; Inservice Teacher Education; Intercultural Communication; *Multicultural Education; Postsecondary Education; School Business Relationship; Secondary Education; *Vocational Education

ABSTRACT

As the work force becomes increasingly culturally diverse, vocational educators must concentrate more on multiculturalism in order to prepare students for the world of work and to help them meet employers' needs. Negative stereotypes held by various culturally diverse groups influence their decision not to enroll in vocational education courses. When they do enroll, students from diverse cultural backgrounds tend to choose occupational preparation programs for lower-wage occupations than do white students. Multicultural education should help students of diverse backgrounds to develop competence in the predominant culture while retaining a positive group identity. It also helps students of diverse backgrounds to get along better with each other. Efforts to recruit and retain students from diverse cultural backgrounds into vocational education must be made, and successful role models should be provided by recruiting vocational education teachers from diverse cultural backgrounds. Staff development activities should be carried out to ensure that teachers make efforts to treat all students equitably. Culture-fair testing should be ensured. Vocational education must accept the challenge of preparing students for a culturally diverse work force. (Contains 29 references.) (KC)

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MONOGRAPH

BRINGING MULTICULTURALISM TO VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

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Published by the Center for Sex Equity, The Ohio State University, College of Education, Center on Education and Training for Employment, 1900 Kenny Road, Columbus, Ohio 43210, through a grant from the Ohio Department of Education, Division of Vocational and Career Education, Education for Employment, Vocational Equity. Volume 8, Number 1, 1993.

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- Culturally diverse perspectives and experiences must be included in vocational training programs in the content and context of what is taught and must be considered throughout the instructional processes.
- Efforts to recruit students from diverse cultural backgrounds into vocational training programs for high-wage occupations must be increased as must efforts to retain these students.
- Efforts to provide successful role models for students by recruiting and retaining vocational education teachers from diverse cultural backgrounds must be increased.

WHY MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION?

Current projections indicate that individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds—both native- and foreign-born—will constitute one-third of the total population in the United States by the year 2000 (Council of Chief State School Officers [CCSSO], 1991). Because of the rapid demographic changes occurring in this nation, schools have been actively responding to increased cultural diversity through desegregation, bilingual education, English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) adult education classes, and ethnic studies and celebrations. A primary intent of the current education reform movement has been to improve the educational outcomes of underachieving students from diverse cultural backgrounds (CCSSO, 1991). However, as Hodgkinson (1989) stated, students from diverse cultural backgrounds are receiving a separate and unequal education when compared to students from the dominant Anglo culture.

According to work force projections, an increasing number of new workers are individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds. Perrin (cited in Cross, 1992) stated that 74 percent of the companies studied regarded cultural diversity as an immediate corporate concern. Almost 30 percent reported that cultural diversity was affecting their management decisions. The *Vocational Education Journal* (1991) dedicated an entire issue to the theme, *Working in a Culturally Diverse Society*. In that issue, Betances (1991) focused on how schools and businesses could profit from the talents of people from diverse cultures. He stated that if educators fail to accept the fact of multiculturalism in schools, they will fail to educate. Wilcox (1991) went on to elaborate that employers are finding that having a multicultural work force provides a competitive advantage: *Companies that promote awareness of work force diversity issues say formal programs can—*

- *make employees more productive;*
- *improve company operations, products, and services;*
- *encourage organizational flexibility;*
- *open new markets; and*
- *foster international partnerships.*

The vocational education system prepares individuals for the world of work and responds to the needs of business and industry. Individuals from culturally diverse backgrounds need to become better educated and better prepared for higher-wage occupations. Students from the dominant Anglo culture need to learn to work with individuals with the diverse attitudes, beliefs, values, and opinions of varying cultural heritages. Vocational education must respond.

BARRIERS TO MULTICULTURALISM IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

Negative stereotypes held by various culturally diverse groups influence their decision not to enroll in vocational education courses (Bowen & Jackson, 1992). For example, Larke and Barr (1987) indicate that participation in agricultural programs is discouraged in some cultures because of stereotypes associated with being a farm laborer or field hand. Hispanics, for example, have for generations provided the bulk of the farm labor in states

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in the Southwest; thus, some Hispanic youth tend to have negative perceptions concerning agricultural occupations (Reed & Flores, 1987). These perceptions exist even though less than 2 percent of modern agriculturally related occupations are linked directly to on-farm activities (Larke & Barr, 1987). Students from diverse cultural backgrounds tend to view vocational education as a tracking system designed to keep them from pursuing a college education. They need to be able to pursue both paths during high school and to keep their options open (Governor's Commission on Socially Disadvantaged Black Males, 1990).

According to the *FY91 Ethnic and Handicapped Report* by Taxonomy (Ohio Department of Education, 1991), Ohio's students from diverse cultural backgrounds (Native American, Asian, African American, and Hispanic) made up 19.4 percent of the total enrollment statewide for secondary job-training programs and 22.4 percent of the total enrollment for secondary cooperative education programs. Students from diverse cultural backgrounds constituted 13.3 percent of the total enrollment for postsecondary job-training programs but only 8.6 percent of all vocational apprenticeship programs.

Vocational education enrollments across Ohio show, in general, that higher-wage occupations are disproportionately dominated by white students, and lower-wage occupations are disproportionately dominated by students from diverse cultural backgrounds. For example, each of the following popular vocational programs (at least 100 students enrolled and distributed statewide) had less than a 10 percent enrollment of students from diverse cultural backgrounds.

Program	Level	Percentage White
Medical Assistant	Postsecondary	98.0
Aircraft Maintenance	Postsecondary	97.0
Dental Hygiene	Postsecondary	97.0
All Agriculture Programs	Secondary	96.8
Practical Nurse	Secondary	96.3
Basic EMT	Postsecondary	95.3
Auto Technology	Postsecondary	95.0
Radiology Technician	Postsecondary	94.0
Supervision and Administration	Secondary	93.0
Marine Maintenance	Secondary	91.0
Electrician	Secondary	90.5

In other popular vocational programs in Ohio (at least 100 students enrolled and distributed statewide) enrollments of students from diverse cultural backgrounds equaled or exceeded 24 percent.

Program	Level	Percentage Diverse Students
Fabric Services	Secondary	59.4
Custodial Services	Secondary	43.0
Aircraft Maintenance	Secondary	40.0
Commercial & Home Services	Secondary	39.0
Medical Lab Assistant	Secondary	38.0
Nurse Assistant	Secondary	37.0
General Office	Secondary	34.0
Diversified Health Occupations	Secondary	33.0
Food Service	Secondary	32.0
Business Duplication Systems	Secondary	32.0
Industrial Maintenance	Secondary	28.0
Commercial Art	Secondary	24.0
Clerical Services	Secondary	24.0

Several reasons for the low enrollment of diverse students in K-12 vocational programs in large urban centers were named by large-city school district directors of vocational education in a recent report of the Governor's Commission on Socially Disadvantaged Black Males (1990):

- *Counselors, administrators, parents, and teacher educators attitudes*
- *Early scheduling of students that locks them into particular curriculum paths from which they cannot escape*
- *Scheduling that commits students to academic tracks and then leaves vocational education as a second or third option—if it can be fit into the student's schedule*
- *Absence of vocational education counselors*
- *Bombardment of schools and students with college recruitment literature*
- *Absence of specific staff assignments for vocational education recruitment responsibilities*
- *Lack of cooperation between vocational education and the rest of the public education enterprise*
- *Negative image of vocational education as perceived by boards of education members and academic teachers*

This same report suggested that the following changes need to be made:

- *Develop and implement a multicultural curriculum.*
- *Actively recruit teachers from diverse cultural backgrounds.*
- *Develop strong parent training programs.*
- *Increase the sensitivity of teachers, counselors, and school administrators to multicultural issues.*
- *Provide human relations training to all personnel of the school system, including secretarial, custodial and clerical staff, bus drivers, and other support personnel, as well as professional staff.*

Activities to recruit teachers from diverse cultural backgrounds need to be increased because these positive role models can help reduce negative stereotypes. Activities to recruit students from diverse cultural backgrounds need to be increased also. This can be accomplished in part by advertising the benefits of vocational programs in churches or other organizations where individuals of diverse cultural backgrounds spend their time. As the student population in the schools begins to fit the population predictions, the clientele in each and every classroom will either reflect the change or result in an **empty classroom** (Reed & Flores, 1987).

WHAT IS MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION?

Sleeter and Grant (1987) reviewed and analyzed multicultural education literature published between 1963 and 1984. Their analysis identified five different viewpoints on the subject of multicultural education in this country:

1. Teaching the Culturally Different—Helps students of diverse backgrounds to develop competence in the public culture of the dominant group and to develop a positive group identity that builds on their home cultures.

2. Human Relations—Helps students of diverse backgrounds to communicate, to get along better with each other, and to feel good about themselves.

3. Single Group Studies—Builds acceptance, appreciation, and empathy for diversity in America by focusing on the experiences and cultures of a specific group and by affording insight so that reflective decisions can be used to resolve personal problems, influence public policy, and develop a sense of political efficacy.

4. Multicultural Education—Considers multiple cultural perspectives and focuses on common goals of promoting—
   - the strength and value of cultural diversity;
   - human rights and respect for cultural diversity;
   - alternative life choices for people;
   - social justice and equal opportunity for all people; and
   - equity and distribution of power among members of all ethnic groups.

5. Education That is Multicultural and Social Reconstructionist—Includes *multicultural education* (#4 above) and, additionally, prepares individuals to take social action against social structural inequality. This action-oriented form of multicultural education encourages students to use knowledge for the betterment of society.

The Sleeter and Grant analysis suggests that multicultural education, in its more developed forms, is education for all learners—both minority and majority students. It is education that promotes and strengthens respect for cultural diversity and social justice, and it prepares students to apply their education for the betterment of society (CCSSO, 1991).

Cortés (1990) offered the following guidelines regarding multicultural education:

1. All students, regardless of the composition of the school, community, or region, need multicultural education that engages the full spectrum of the country's racial and ethnic diversity, because all students live in the same multiethnic nation.

2. Multicultural education should simultaneously explore similarities and differences.

3. Multicultural education should operate continuously, not sporadically; it should span the curriculum and should cut across all subject areas throughout the school year.

4. Multicultural education is not simply education to reduce prejudice, although well-conceived, well-implemented multicultural education should improve intergroup awareness and understanding.

5. Multicultural education should not be viewed as a quick-fix. Racial, ethnic, and religious bigotry and conflict have existed for centuries, and schools should not be expected to *solve* problems that have eternally plagued America.

THE CROSS-CULTURAL AWARENESS CONTINUUM

Locke and Parker (1991) discuss a cross-cultural awareness continuum that can help vocational educators learn to deal effectively with classroom diversity. The first level consists of increasing the educator's self-awareness—the process of examining personal beliefs, attitudes, opinions, and values. The second level moves the educator to an awareness of how culture affects the formation of self. Next, educators must develop an awareness of how racism, sexism, and poverty have all been aspects of their culture. This must be understood before educators can move to the next level, which allows respect for individual differences. Once it is understood that each individual is unique, an exploration of other cultures will be of interest. Specifics about other cultural beliefs and values then helps educators realize that generalized assumptions about people are sometimes true about some individuals in some circumstances, but that most generalized assumptions often have little basis.

The acceptance of diversity can lead to a pluralistic (rather than melting-pot) society in which certain features of each culture are encouraged and appreciated by other cultural groups. The final level of awareness is the application of education skills and techniques and the implementation of what has been learned about working with culturally diverse groups. This implies that the educator is sensitive to and has an understanding of cultural differences and similarities and is able to apply this sensitivity when working with all students. It also implies that the educator is able to teach his or her students some of these same skills.

WHAT CAN VOCATIONAL EDUCATORS DO?

In the Classroom and the School

Scott (1992), supervisor of multicultural education for Columbus (Ohio) City Schools, focuses on three components for ensuring the use of a multicultural approach in the classroom and the school:

1. **Content—Addressing the need for a multiculturally infused curriculum via daily lesson plans.** The content of instruction must include multiple perspectives and must portray images of people from diverse backgrounds. Whenever possible, these diverse perspectives must be presented by representatives of diverse cultures. Materials that represent diverse cultures must be used, and speakers should be invited to the classroom. Role models have a powerful impact on students. Broad perspectives must be presented as acceptable. And, background information about the social, political, or economic realities of representatives from diverse cultures must be presented.

2. **Context—Addressing the need to establish a multiculturally sensitive environment and attitude within the**

classroom and the school. Issues related to the context of multicultural instruction include the use of diverse interaction patterns, not only encouraging teacher/student interaction, but student/student interaction as well. Different ways of answering questions and organizing information must be accepted. Opportunities for students to move around should be provided. Teachers can invite diverse perspectives by eliminating labeling and stereotyping and holding high expectations for all students.

3. **Instructional Process—Addressing the need to utilize teaching strategies that accommodate the learning needs of a diverse student population.** Recent research (Gilliland, 1988; Hale-Benson, 1986) indicates that many girls and individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds favor collective, noncompetitive modes of instruction. Cooperative learning fosters interaction and collective approaches in problem solving and learning; it eliminates the traditional focus on individual achievement and competition that leads to self-interest and distrust among students (Lebow, 1992). Cooperative learning offers students of varying ability or learning styles the opportunity to work together as a team, sharing accountability and responsibility for the success of the entire group, with the understanding that members will assist each other's learning as needed. Cooperative learning techniques all possess the following key characteristics:
   - Shared group identity
   - Inclusiveness
   - Group values and shared authority
   - Individual and mutual responsibility
   - Group rewards and evaluation
   - Tangible, practical skill development
   - Learner exchange
   - Interactive environment
   - Mutually supportive social atmosphere

Teachers can also attend to the different learning styles of individuals by using a variety of instructional strategies. Some of these include peer teaching, student questioning, critical thinking, small-group discussions, small-group projects, role playing, demonstrations, brainstorming, and the use of learning centers. Teachers should tap into students' prior knowledge—hear what they think they know—before new information or concepts are presented (Scott, 1992).

In Personal Attitudes and Interactions

Teachers should get to know people on a personal level. Use individuals names, and avoid reference to their cultural group affiliation when it is not appropriate. Individuals don't want to be generalized. Never ask an individual to represent their whole cultural group; ask only for their personal opinion or experience. Avoid negative stereotypic assumptions, and don't be afraid to ask about someone's cultural heritage if you are interested. Show a desire to learn, and be prepared to listen when you do ask.

Try to be accepting and open to the diverse experiences and opinions of individuals. Learn about cultural heritages and how they influence people. People of diverse cultures bring many different elements to the educational experience and to the workplace. The following comments were made by individuals in *Managing a Diverse Workplace: Understanding Different Cultural Values and Styles* (1992), a videotaped interview with workers concerning how managers could help other workers understand and deal with individuals with diverse cultural values. The workers from diverse cultural backgrounds all stressed that they wanted to be viewed as individuals and that they didn't want to be labeled with negative stereotypes. Each group stressed positive cultural heritages that their members bring to the workplace. Hispanic people bring a strong work ethic and a sense of loyalty to their endeavors; the African American, pride and intelligence; the American Indian, politeness and respect; and the Asian American, productiveness and honor. Respecting individuals and striving to overcome negative stereotypes can encourage real cultural values to operate more freely and productively.

Educators should learn the correct pronunciation of culturally diverse names, and should then ask what each individual prefers to be called. A genuine acceptance and understanding of differences will lead to an appreciation of differences. Educators have a responsibility to teach the value of cultural diversity. If you have classes where there are no individuals from culturally diverse backgrounds, invite culturally diverse individuals to speak to the class about their occupational experiences. Make an extra effort to use materials that reflect culturally diverse workers, and teach the employability skills of teamwork, cooperation, and appreciation of diversity. Go out of your way to recruit students from culturally diverse backgrounds into your vocational classes.

In Staff Development Activities

Research conducted in classrooms across the country indicates that educators communicate gender, racial, and ethnic biases to students frequently and in various ways, such as using the generic *he* when they mean everyone, displaying posters and using teaching materials that portray only white workers in roles traditional for their sex, and only calling on students they think will *know* the answer. *Gender/Ethnic Expectations and Student Achievement* (GESA) is a staff development program designed to help educators identify and rectify the biases they may be conveying to their students (Grayson & Martin, 1990). Through GESA, teachers receive the tools they need to make changes in classroom interactions, operations, methods, and materials.

When a teacher makes an effort to treat everyone equitably, students also show increasing acceptance and tolerance for others. GESA promotes equity in instructional contact, grouping, classroom control, self-concept development, and the evaluation of student performance. Students who are taught in an equitable classroom environment are better prepared to interact successfully with others in the workplace and in personal relationships (Lindley, Keithley, & Foor, 1990).

In Testing

Equality in testing should also be a focus in the classroom. Research shows that women and individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds don't score as high as white males on standardized tests (Rosser, 1989; Tittle, 1978). One reason is that the items are stated in terms of the majority white male culture.

Teachers should be careful to construct tests that portray the ethnically diverse in nonstereotypic roles, make references to both sexes and use ethnically diverse names, and present individuals in occupations nontraditional for their sex.

Research also indicates that women and individuals from ethnically diverse backgrounds score higher than white males on essay questions, computation problems, and algebra items. White males are generally better at geometry problems; word problem-solving; topics related to math, science, and sports; and timed tests in general. To combat this differential scoring, teachers should try to use a combination of different types of questions; avoid questions that invoke culture or sex bias; and avoid questions that unnecessarily use sports or science examples. Coaching women and individuals of diverse cultural backgrounds can assure them they can do the work. And, by offering them a variety of problems to practice on prior to the test, their test and math anxiety can be overcome.

CONCLUSION

Classroom diversity can be a positive attribute that enhances instruction. Heterogeneous work groups capitalize on the diverse talents inherent in any group, whether in the classroom or in the workplace. If the demographics of a local school district show cultural diversity then the vocational enrollment should show cultural diversity as well. If those vocational classrooms are void of cultural diversity, a definite problem exists. If teachers and vocational schools are not currently attracting individuals from culturally diverse backgrounds now is the time to do so. Vocational educators cannot prepare students for the world of work without preparing all students to work effectively with others. And, as stated earlier, either vocational classrooms will reflect the changing diversity in our population or the classrooms will be empty.

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ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

For inservice workshops or other assistance, contact Ohio's Vocational Equity Office at (614) 466-5910. For additional information, you may consult the resources listed below. These resources and others are available for loan to Ohio vocational educators by contacting the Sex Equity Resource Library at the Center on Education and Training for Employment. 1900 Kenny Road, Columbus, Ohio 43210, (614) 292-4353 or (800) 848-4815; Steve Chambers, Librarian.

America's Women of Color: Integrating Cultural Diversity Into Non-Sex-Biased Curricula. (1982). Newton, MA: Women's Educational Equity Act Program.

Three documents—Secondary Curriculum Guide, Teacher-Training Manual, and Annotated Bibliography—offer educators information about and activities and resources for integrating cultural diversity into the classroom. Activities to reduce stereotyping and promote teamwork are included.

Cross Cultural Communication: An Essential Dimension of Effective Education. (1987). Washington, DC: Mid-Atlantic Equity Center.

An excellent booklet which helps to promote communication skills and understanding of the culturally diverse and which assists teachers in recognizing and utilizing student diversity in ways that enhance academic identity. The booklet suggests that students often show a resultant gain in achievement.

Ganadores: Libro de Trabajo del Estudiante. (1989). Andover, MA: The Network.

Teacher and student handbooks offer exercises for and information on working with Hispanic students. Classroom climate and communication are examined in light of cultural differences. Classroom materials and activities are written in Spanish and show how to eliminate bias in language and textbooks.

Images: A Workbook for Enhancing Self-Esteem and Promoting Career Preparation, Especially for Black Girls. (1988). Sacramento, CA: California State Department of Education.

A workbook to help black girls learn to assert themselves, examine successful role models, explore traditional and nontraditional careers, and learn to take responsibility for their own success. The workbook includes many activities that require self-exploration.

Managing a Diverse Workplace: Understanding Different Cultural Values and Styles. (1992). Princeton, NJ: Films for the Humanities and Sciences.

A 50-minute videotape that explores ways to teach people how to work effectively with others. Individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds offer their opinions about how they want to be viewed and treated by coworkers.

Mathematics and Science: Critical Filters for the Future of Minority Students. (1985). Washington, DC: Mid-Atlantic Equity Center.

This booklet examines the effective school, the effective principal, the principal as change agent, and an intervention plan for use with teachers. Factors influencing minority student participation and performance, intervention strategies and programs, and tools for assessment and planning are examined.

The Mosaic Workplace: Understanding Our Biases and Assumptions. (1992). Princeton, NJ: Films for the Humanities and Sciences.

This 10-minute videotape explores how individuals' biases and stereotypes need to be changed in order to learn to work effectively with others. Individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds are presented in the workplace.

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